

Remy's brings Old World ambience to bustling Naples neighborhood



Whatever we were expecting when we pulled into a parking spot in the Target Plaza, Remy's Neighborhood Bistro wasn't it.

No matter how many lovely little restaurants I encounter in shopping centers, I continue to be surprised at what enterprising entrepreneurs can do with what could easily be generic, lackluster spaces.

Remy's is neither generic nor lackluster. It is, in fact, far more like the cozy European cafes in which I've whiled away an afternoon or evening after hours of arduous sightseeing. I'm fairly certain that some of the murals gracing the bistro's walls were scenes I'd glimpsed from the windows of those same cafes in places like Portofino, Naxos and Orvieto.

The room has a festive, relaxed feel to it. Substantial tables boast sturdy faux marble tops, banquettes line a half wall that divides the bar from the dining room, bottles of preserved vegetables form colorful displays along shelves, and a large bar — at which there wasn't a vacant seat — takes up an entire wall but for the wine rack on one side.



Duck spring rolls topped with crisp noodles lend an Asian touch to the mainly Mediterranean menu at Remy's. Above the windows that span two sides of the dining room are the aforementioned murals, each depicting a different Mediterranean scene.

Even the exposed ceiling gets gussied up with cloth panels adorned with painted plants hanging among the air-conditioning ducts.

A smiling host let us choose our table, and our server appeared and introduced herself moments after we sat down. The team effort makes a good first impression, signaling the staff's welcoming attitude.

Remy's has a full bar complete with a menu listing specialty martinis and other drinks. The wine list offers respectable variety. We ordered glasses of Penfolds shiraz and Banfi chianti, which tasted fresh but were served at a too-warm Florida room temperature rather than that of a slightly chilled wine cellar.



[Seafood Provencal comes loaded with scallops, shrimp, salmon and mussels in a pesto cream sauce.](#) The menu has a Mediterranean flavor, with French and Italian dishes predominating — classic onion soup, nut-crust Brie, caprese, frutti di mare and osso buco among them. Little surprises crop up here and there, such as duck spring rolls, blackened scallops and a seafood tower, for example.

Duck spring rolls (\$8.95) and shrimp and lobster bisque, the soup du jour (\$5.50), began our meal.

The bisque had the classic creamy consistency with some lobster flavor and what tasted like clam, which may have come from the stock. The spring rolls were attractively cut into easy-to-eat segments and set upright on the plate, then topped with crisp noodles. The rolls were crunchy and the duck stuffing chewy with delicate seasoning. The only flaw: They were just barely warm.

Next came entrees of osso buco (\$22.95) and seafood Provencal (\$19.25), both of which looked lovely. The Provencal consisted of a montage of good-looking seafood — scallops, salmon, shrimp and mussels swimming about in a pesto cream sauce over capellini. We'd both have opted for a more assertive pesto — more basil and garlic, please — but the mild sauce allowed the flavor of the seafood to emerge in a way it wouldn't have with a bolder sauce. (Remy's also offers seafood prepared fra diavolo or blackened, either of which no doubt would have had more lively sauces.)

The osso buco contained lamb rather than the more traditional veal, but it was fork tender from long braising, and the mellow tomato-based sauce swathing it was delicious. Roasted red skin potatoes and medley of fresh veggies finished the plate.

After clearing away the entrée dishes, our server brought over a small but well filled dessert tray bearing a couple of rich chocolate items, an equally rich looking pecan pie and a lovely parfait glass layered with chocolate and caramel mousse (\$6.50). It looked like an ice cream sundae, but one spoonful made it clear that it was creamy mousse. Topped with a generous helping of whipped cream and a drizzle of raspberry sauce, it satisfied without being so rich and sweet as to make us regret eating it after a large meal.

That Remy's can deliver such a wide-ranging and accomplished dinner menu would be admirable enough, but the place also serves breakfast and lunch every day except Sunday. Omelets, frittata, French toast, pancakes, waffles and pastry nests are the stars in the morning, segueing into lunch with soups, salads, sandwiches, wraps and hot entrees.

All of which brings me back to those European cafes that seem to be perpetually open and ready whenever a weary traveler needs sustenance and hospitality. Remy's is such a place, and one to which I'll turn again when in search of good food and comfort.

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